

This work is only intended for those making their first attempts at physiological work. It makes no claim to rival the large works of Cyon, Scheidlen, and Sanderson. In the first part, the first chapter gives a description of the instruments generally used ; the second chapter, the choice of animals ; the third and fourth chapters, the mode of serving animals and fastening them ; the fifth chapter, the operations most commonly made.

In the second part are described special operative procedures on the glands, the circulatory, respiratory, muscular, and nervous apparatuses. The explanations given are clear and easily understood by means of the figures found in the text. Whilst making no pretensions to originality this work is certainly an excellent *résumé* of instructions for the physiological neophyte. It is written from practical knowledge, and describes several little things of great importance to the working physiologist.

Suicide : an essay on comparative moral statistics.

By HENRY MORSELLI, M. D. (International Scientific Series : Appleton & Co., New York, 1882.)

Dr. Morselli divides his work into two parts : the first, analytical ; the second, synthetical. There is, moreover, an appendix showing the method by which statistical data of suicide are collected ; and some tinted maps illustrating the comparative intensity of suicide in the various parts of Europe. The analytical portion of the book is based upon statistical tables, comprising data for the study of suicide from every conceivable point of view. There is not only, in fact, no deficiency upon the statistical side, but the most fervent devourer of statistics might find here, one would suppose, a feast if not a surfeit. Nobody nowadays is likely to underrate the value of tables of this kind ; but the question will occasionally arise, whether the significance of some of them may not be so far supplementary to that of others as to become practically superfluous likewise. In the present case, such a misgiving would be enhanced by consideration of the fact that many of the groups of data are negative rather than affirmative in their testimony, while not a few of them appear helplessly to contradict each other. The difficulty of constructing a redoubtable scientific structure upon a foundation composed of materials so ambiguous, will perhaps suggest itself to a dispassionate judgment ; and the more credit will be accorded Dr. Morselli for the laborious and conscientious manner in which he has struggled with his subject. The learned author, while not seeming to underestimate

the magnitude of the task before him, or to disguise the unsympathetic character of much of his *impedimenta*, nowhere betrays any serious doubts as to the possibility of reducing suicide to strictly scientific terms, or even as to his own ability to assume a prominent part in the attainment of that result. It is not always perfectly evident, to the reader of the essay, how the writer of it contrives to maintain so much composure in the presence of obstacles that might discourage ordinary enterprise ; especially as Dr. Morselli disclaims *a priori* argument, and professes to gain his conclusions by impartial consideration of facts. The conclusion at which he arrives, or which, at all events, he announces, is that suicide is not an act depending upon the personal spontaneity of man, but is a mere social fact in the same sense as are births, deaths, crimes, etc. It is an effect of the struggle for existence and of human selection, working according to the laws of evolution among civilized people : and the sole cure for it is " to develop in man the power of well-ordering sentiments and ideas, by which to reach a certain aim in life ; in short, to give force and energy to the moral character." We quote the author's own (translated) words in this instance, lest, in paraphrasing them, their purport should be misinterpreted. For their purport as they at present stand, only the author and his translator can be held responsible ; and possibly they likewise monopolize the knowledge of what that purport is. We have not had the opportunity of comparing the American edition of Dr. Morselli's work with the original ; but, except upon the assumption that his style is one of unusual verbosity, long-windedness, obscurity, and grammatical frailty, we cannot avoid suspecting that he has been unfortunate in the selection of his American literary tailor, who modestly withholds his name from the title-page. But this by the way. The interesting point is that Dr. Morselli is led by his tables to regard self-slaughter as an act dependent rather upon the suicide's derivation and environment, than upon himself ; to consider it " under the generic aspect of a tendency certainly hurtful, but connected with the natural development of society." Admitting these conclusions to be warranted by the ascertained facts, it follows that would-be reformers should apply their efforts rather to society than to the individual ; since, however highly the latter may appreciate the good intent of their exhortations, he would be precluded, by the automatic helplessness of his position *vis-a-vis* to the statistical tables, from profiting by them.

It would manifestly be impossible, within the limits at our dis-

posal, to enter upon an exhaustive examination of the steps whereby Dr. Morselli's persuasion has been reached, and for the attainment of which (as he himself intimates) Messrs. Malthus, Darwin, Spencer, Carpenter, Laycock, Buckle, Wagner, and others, are more or less responsible. A brief glance, however, may be given at the general features of his route. In the first place, then, it is to be observed, that the statistics of suicide have only begun to be collected since the year 1817 or thereabouts; and that the returns have been received only from Europe and some parts of the United States. Of these returns a large portion are so incomplete as to afford but an insecure basis for argument; and all of them suffer from the drawback that the prejudices, the habits, the indifference, and the bad faith of those from whom information is sought, deprive that information of an appreciable part of its value. Furthermore, various possible tables, such as that relating to the limits and classification of individual motives, have not as yet come into existence at all. In fact, had Dr. Morselli proposed to himself to show that suicide is the result of the individual's free will and choice, instead of the contrary, it seems likely that the arduousness of his labor would have been in no way diminished; since few suicides have manifested an interest in scientific progress sufficient to induce them to bequeath to statisticians a subjective analysis of their proceedings. Be that as it may, we are informed by the author that the statistical returns of suicide show a regularity surpassing that of the laws of birth, death, and marriage; that accidents over which the human will has no control often show greater variations than suicide, homicide, and marriage; that the frequency of suicide shows a growing and uniform increase, more rapid than that of population; and that the average number of suicides per million of population varies, in various nations, from about 20 to 300, rising in special instances to much higher figures. All this indicates a grave and possibly alarming state of things, which might end in the depopulation of the globe by the simple process of self-extermination; the rather since Dr. Morselli has made up his mind that suicide and civilization proceed *pari passu*, and that the latter at least is destined to prevail. Nevertheless, the evidence does not so far seem to be conclusive that suicide is a merely social necessity; for statistics might conceivably be collected to prove the uniform increase of the eating of turtle-soup, or the compilation of dry-as-dust folios; though neither of these practices could prudently be described as being as much beyond the individual's control as birth, death, or even marriage.

Referring to the tables, however, one fact seems to emerge with a constancy agreeably in contrast with that of the majority of results obtained : namely, that the Germanic race is the one most prone to suicide ; and, on the other hand, that the Slavs are least so. Those nations in which the Germanic element is strongest are always those which find life least endurable. The mind finds no difficulty in accepting this discovery, if, indeed, it were not already prepared for it ; and when it is added that Saxony is the hot-bed of suicide in Europe, and probably in the world, readers who happen to have visited that country might almost feel moved to exclaim : " I told you so ! " But how does this assist Dr. Morselli in believing that suicide is an involuntary phase of social evolution ? Is not its tendency rather to prove that the self-murderous impulse is strictly and intelligibly subjective ? The author, however, has other tables in reserve ; and he endeavors to prove that it is the superior cerebral development of the Germanic race, and their bias toward Protestantism—which, as being a mystic form of religion, tends to agitate and confuse the mental faculties—that are responsible for their equivocal behavior in the matter of self-destruction. The inward struggles of conscience, and the state of mental compromise between the metaphysical and the positivist phases of civilization, are affirmed, on the testimony of the necessary tables, to be productive of the fatal issue. There seems no reason why this should not be true, nor why, if true, they should confirm the author's hypothesis. But here, the tables on which Dr. Morselli would rely are turned upon him by the evidence of certain other tables, which declare that the suicidal tendency in some nations of high civilization is not greater than in others imperfectly civilized ; that in France education appears to have no influence on suicide ; that the influence of Paris neutralizes that of religion ; that the people most devoted to the moral sentiment and domestic affections have most illegitimate children, and are most suicidal ; that, although all that causes retrogression in a state or class promotes suicide, yet there is no exact relation between specific crime and the suicidal tendency—there being, for instance, more criminals and less suicides among Catholics than among Protestants, while Jews are less criminal and oftener insane than either Protestants or Catholics ; that the development of commerce would seem to increase suicide, as in the case of Saxony, but, on the other hand, Genoa, with more trade than all the other Italian ports combined, has fewer suicides than Ravenna, which is comparatively inactive ; that when the

State tyrannizes over the individual, suicide is rare, while peoples given to helping themselves are apt to cut their throats ; that although the relation between density of inhabitants and suicide is wanting almost everywhere, yet the proportion of suicides in Europe is greater among the condensed population of urban centres than among the scattered inhabitants of the country—with the deduction that this rule is not uniform, nor according to the ratio with the mass of the inhabitants ; that the army, the institution above all others obstructive of civilization, suicide is more prevalent than anywhere else—in Italy, for instance, the army suicides being tenfold as numerous as among civilians ; and so on, until the student is almost impelled to exclaim with jesting Pilate, “What is truth ?” and to stay not for an answer.

The fact seems to be, that although the statistics undoubtedly go to prove something, the discovery has not yet been made of what that something is ; but only, and at most, that Dr. Morselli’s particular conviction has, up to present accounts, rather less evidence in favor of it than the theory which contradicts him. Dr. Morselli is painstaking, methodical, and honest to the point of admitting more evidence against his cause than for it ; but he seems to us to fail somewhat of placing suicide among the exact sciences ; and if we accord him a perfect right to hold his own opinion concerning it, it is precisely because there is just as much—or as little—ground for one opinion as for another. Meanwhile, and pending further developments, we conceive that no harm will be done by refraining from pushing the theories of natural selection, of Malthusianism, and of automatism too far in relation to suicide.

The true value of the book probably lies in the tables, partial and untrustworthy as many of them are. We learn, for example, such curious facts as that the ratio of female to male suicides is as one to three or four ; that Spanish women are more suicidal than any others in Europe ; that countries with a larger number of women than men, have, nevertheless, more suicides than in the alternative case ; that the period of most frequent suicide is from the fortieth to the sixtieth year—in women, under thirty or thirty-five ; that more widows commit suicide than widowers ; that divorce is more fatal to men than to women ; that marriage checks suicide, and that children have a more restraining influence upon mothers than upon fathers ; that prisoners in solitary confinement commit suicide at the rate of 1,370 to the million, while on the associated system the proportion is only 350 ; that post and telegraph em-

ployés have the least tendency to suicide of any of the professions, while those engaged in industrial occupations are at the other extreme. But we have passed our limits, and must refer the reader who desires further information to the book itself.

Some experiences of a barrister's life. By Mr. Serjeant BALLANTINE. 12mo, pp. 527.

Serjeant Ballantine, an eminent member of the English bar, has seen fit to give us some experiences of his career as a lawyer, which for frankness and freedom are unsurpassed by any similar productions in the same line which have come under our observation. His references to the medical profession are many, and generally are in a kindly spirit; but his criticisms on judges and his fellow barristers are often so thoroughly outspoken and antagonistic, that we venture the assertion that the author will be kept in hot water for the remainder of his life. However that may be, the honesty of the serjeant is not to be questioned. Many *causes célèbres* have their interiors exposed to view, and his remarks relative to expert testimony are such as will meet with general acceptance from both the medical and legal professions. There are also shrewd observations in regard to damages for railway accidents, kleptomania, and other medico-legal subjects of great interest to physicians.

We wish we could speak in equally unqualified terms of what he says about vivisection. Here he looks at the matter altogether from the animals' point of view, disregarding entirely the advantages which properly conducted experiments afford to human beings. We wonder, for instance, what he or Mr. Bergh would do, if it was suspected that the baby of either of them (if either has a baby) had taken food which it was supposed might have caused certain alarming symptoms, and the doctor, to test the matter, so as to have a guide for his own action, and to subserve the possible ends of justice, should give a portion of the suspected mass to a worthless cat or dog. And yet, such conduct, from their standpoint, would be altogether unjustifiable. The cruel sentimentality of the serjeant on this subject is strangely at variance with his hard common-sense on other matters.

A remarkable feature of his book is the revelation it makes of his bad memory in regard to occurrences which one would think could scarcely fail to make a strong impression upon him. He forgets with whom he dined on several memorable occasions; the name of the vessel that brought him back from his memorable visit to India; the name of a fish which he found particularly